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**Testimony of State Senator Brad Hoylman
Before the New York State Energy Planning Board
Regarding the 2014 Draft Energy Plan**

February 20, 2014

I'd like to welcome the New York State Energy Planning Board to New York State's 27th Senate District, which I represent. This district includes the neighborhoods of Clinton/Hell's Kitchen, Chelsea, Times Square, Greenwich Village, Midtown/East Midtown, the East Village, Lower East Side and the Upper West Side.

I want to thank the Board for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the 2014 Draft Energy Plan, and for the Board's hard work in developing this plan given the complexity of New York State's unique energy needs and resources.

I would also like to thank the Board for adhering to the commitment previously set by the State to reduce greenhouse gasses up to 80% by the year 2050. The plan contains valuable tools, such as the extension of the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) and the Energy Efficiency Portfolio Standard (EEPS), for meeting that 80% reduction goal.

These mechanisms represent environmentally progressive policy at its best, allowing for the public sector to encourage and guide the private sector toward the common good. We have already seen the impact of these tools on the promotion of clean energy in New York, as well as in other states. The continued use of RPS and EEPS will make renewable energies even more competitive in the years to come, allowing for the further displacement of the dirty fuels which are still too common today.

The plan is a first step in establishing a path to reducing our reliance on some of the more conventional fossil fuels, which contribute to climate change, and establishes contingencies for the shuttering of the Indian Point nuclear power plant, whose



operation presents well-known risks to residents throughout New York State, including my constituents here in Manhattan.

That being said, I am concerned by the plan's reliance on the expanded use of natural gas, especially in order to compensate for the reductions in other fuels and the potential reduction of nuclear power production.

While consumption of natural gas may offer lower levels of carbon dioxide emissions over more widely used fossil fuels such as coal and oil, the fact remains that natural gas is a fossil fuel itself, and its use also contributes to the greenhouse gas emissions which drive climate change. Methane, the primary component of natural gas, is emitted into the air during the extraction process. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, methane is 34 times more effective at trapping heat in our atmosphere over a 100-year period than is carbon dioxide.ⁱ Even more alarming, a recent study by researchers at Harvard University has found that the level of atmospheric methane is substantially higher than previously believed.ⁱⁱ Given these statistics, it is hard to see how natural gas represents a more responsible choice for powering our state. There are also emerging concerns regarding the release of radon through the use of natural gas. I believe we should have answers about the quantity and safety of radon being emitted before we further our reliance on the use of natural gas.

Switching from a harmful energy source to a slightly-less-harmful source, especially when more responsible energy options are available, is bad long-term policy. Furthermore, given the finite supply of natural gas, the potential for unpredictable variations in consumer prices, and the cost and scale of the additional infrastructure needed to deliver and use such fuel, increasing our reliance on natural gas would seem to be a short-sighted investment.

All of this is in addition to the externalities of the natural gas extraction process, which wreaks its own havoc on the environment, destroying landscapes, tainting water supplies, and contributing to asthma-inducing ozone, just to name a few. As you know, the process, known as hydraulic fracturing, requires pumping millions of gallons of water and chemicals at high-pressure into wells to access natural gas in dense mineral formations. While DEC has studied the catastrophes associated with natural gas drilling in Pennsylvania and around the nation, the agency has not developed a regulatory framework to ensure that New York will not suffer a similar fate. As such, I am a staunch opponent of permitting hydraulic fracturing, and I co-sponsor legislation to prohibit fracking anywhere in New York State. We owe it to the generation of tomorrow to be more vigilant with our energy choices today.

In 1931, well before our current debate over fossil fuels, Thomas Edison likened our reliance on non-renewable energy sources to "chopping down the fence around our house for fuel when we should be using nature's inexhaustible sources of energy—sun,

wind, and tide.” More than 80 years later, in light of our modern scientific understanding of how our energy consumption affects the planet, his words are especially prescient. I appreciate the New York State Energy Planning Board being judicious in our current policy so that 80 years from now we will not have destroyed our house altogether. Therefore, I urge the Board to explore opportunities to harness new energy technologies and further reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, including natural gas.

Thank you for your time, and for your consideration of my comments here today.

ⁱ International Panel on Climate Change (September 2013). *Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis*. Retrieved from http://www.climatechange2013.org/images/uploads/WGIAR5_WGI-12Doc2b_FinalDraft_All.pdf

ⁱⁱ Miller, S. M., et al. (November 2013). *Anthropogenic Emissions of Methane in the United States*. Retrieved from <http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2013/11/20/1314392110.abstract>